



greater than this 'just man' could ever have expected within the limits of his human heart.

Excerpt from the apostolic exhortation
of Pope John Paul II on saint Joseph

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Dear fathers and mothers, turn to st Joseph, the head of the Holy Family! No one will have a better understanding of your hardship and sorrow. He is willing and going to help you, if only you pray to him and trust in him with faith and perseverance.

This Month's Heartfelt Matters

- That we do not claim the many graces and blessings we receive from the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass only for us – that we spread them spiritually throughout the world and focus on the Church, on all people who are suffering so much want, spiritually, mentally and physically and on the supplication of the Poor Souls.

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United with very kind regards and the blessing of saint Joseph,

Paula



June 2015

Lay Community of St Joseph

The Just Man – Mary's Spouse

Above all, the 'just' man of Nazareth possesses the clear characteristics of a husband. The evangelist Luke refers to Mary as 'a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph' (cf. Lk 1,27). Even before the 'mystery hidden for ages' (Eph 3,9) began to be fulfilled, the Gospels set before us the image of husband and wife. According to Jewish custom, marriage took place in two stages: first, the legal, or true marriage was celebrated, and then, only after a certain period of time, the husband brought the wife into his own house. Thus, before he lived with Mary, Joseph was already her 'husband.' Mary, however, preserved her deep desire to give herself exclusively and completely to GOD. One may well ask how this desire of Mary's could be reconciled with a 'wedding.' The answer can only come from the saving events as they unfold, from the special action of GOD Himself. From the moment of the Annunciation, Mary knows that she is to fulfil her virginal desire to give herself exclusively and fully to GOD precisely by becoming the Mother of GOD's SON.

Becoming a Mother by the power of the HOLY SPIRIT is the form taken by her gift of self, which GOD Himself expects of the Virgin Mary, who is 'betrothed' to Joseph. And so Mary utters her fiat.

The fact that she is 'betrothed' to Joseph is part of the very plan of GOD. This is pointed out especially by Matthew. The words spoken to Joseph are very significant: „Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit“ (Mt 1,20). These words explain the mystery of Joseph's wife: In her motherhood Mary is a virgin. In her, 'the SON of the Most High' assumes a human body and becomes 'the Son of Man.'

Addressing Joseph through the words of the Angel, GOD speaks to him as the husband of the Virgin of Nazareth. What took place in her through the power of the HOLY SPIRIT also confirms in a special way the marriage bond which already existed between Joseph and Mary. GOD's Messenger is clear in what he says to Joseph: „Do not fear to take Mary your wife into your home.“ Hence, what had taken place earlier – Joseph's marriage to Mary – happened in accord with GOD's will and was meant to endure. In her divine motherhood Mary has to continue to live as 'a virgin, the wife of her husband' (cf. Lk 1,27).

In the words of the 'Annunciation' by night, Joseph not only hears the divine truth concerning his wife's unspeakable vocation, he also hears once again the truth about his own vocation. This 'just' man, who, in the spirit of the noblest traditions of the Chosen People, loved the Virgin of Nazareth and was bound to her by a husband's love, is once again called by GOD to this love.

„Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife into his home“ (Mt 1,24); what was conceived in Mary was 'of the HOLY SPIRIT.' From expressions such as these are we not to suppose that his love as a man was also given new birth by the HOLY SPIRIT? Are we not to think that the love of GOD which has been poured forth into the human heart through the HOLY SPIRIT (cf. Rom 5,5) moulds every human love to perfection? This love of GOD also moulds – in a completely unique way – the conjugal love of husband and wife, deepening within it everything of human worth and beauty, everything that bespeaks an exclusive gift of self, a covenant between persons, and an authentic communion according to the model of the Blessed Trinity.

„Joseph ... took his wife; but he knew her not ...“ (Mt 1,24-25). These words indicate another kind of closeness in marriage. The deep spiritual closeness arising from marital union and the interpersonal contact between man and woman have their definitive origin in the SPIRIT, the Giver of Life (cf. John 6,63). Joseph, in obedience to the SPIRIT, found in Him the source of love, the conjugal love which he experienced as a man. And this love proved to be

